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TITLE: Trends in HIV-Related Risk Behaviors Among High School Students – Selected U.S. Cities, 1991-1997

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: HIV-related risk behaviors among high school students have been decreasing nationwide during the 1990s. To determine whether these same trends hold in urban areas hardest hit by the HIV epidemic, we analyzed data from Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) conducted in eight large cities in 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1997.

METHODS: Each local YRBS employed a two-stage cluster sample design to produce representative samples of students in grades 9-12 in each jurisdiction for the years 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1997. For each of the cross-sectional surveys, students completed an anonymous self-administered questionnaire that included questions about sexual intercourse, number of sex partners, and condom use. Secular trends were analyzed using logistic regression analyses that controlled for sex, grade in school, and race/ethnicity, and simultaneously assessed linear, higher-order (i. e. quadratic and cubic), and overall time effects.

RESULTS: Between 1991 and 1997, a significant linear decrease was found in the proportion of sexually experienced students in Chicago, Dallas, and Fort Lauderdale (all $P < .01$); in Boston, the proportion of sexually experienced students decreased significantly between 1993 and 1997 ($P = .02$). Students in the same four cities showed a significant linear decrease in the prevalence of multiple sex partners (all $P < .05$). A significant linear decrease was found in the proportion of students who reported current sexual activity in Chicago, Dallas, Fort Lauderdale, and Philadelphia (all $P < .05$). Among currently sexually active students, condom use increased significantly in Chicago, Dallas, Fort Lauderdale, Jersey City, Miami, and Philadelphia (all $P < .01$).

CONCLUSIONS: All but one of the cities examined in this study showed a significant improvement in at least one adolescent HIV-related risk behavior. These improvements parallel national trends in sexual experience, multiple sex partners, and condom use among high school students. Despite these improvements, many adolescents remain at risk. Effective policies and programs need to be implemented to increase the number of cities demonstrating improvement and to ensure that such improvements are maintained over time.

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